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AUTHOR Foldenauer, Jerry
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if extracurricular activity participants in the Anchorage (Alaska) School District were dropping out of school at a greater rate as a result of having to meet a "C" average grade requirement for participation. Subjects of the study were all students in grades 9 through 12 who participated in extracurricular activities while enrolled in the Anchorage School District during the 1985-86 and 1986-87 school years. Using enrollment data converted to percentages, the study showed that the dropout rate of extracurricular participants had not increased. Only one percent of all extracurricular activity participants dropped out of school because of an inability to maintain a "C" average. It was concluded that the "C" average grade requirement had not caused an increase in the dropout rate of extracurricular activity participants. (Author/TE)

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The Effect of a "C" Average Grade Requirement on the Dropout Rate of Extracurricular Activities Participants in the Anchorage Public Schools

JERRY FOLDENAUER
College of Education, University of Alaska at Anchorage

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if extracurricular activity participants were dropping out of school at a greater rate as a result of having to meet a "C" average grade requirement for participation. Using enrollment data converted to percentages, it was shown that the dropout rate of extracurricular participants had not increased. Only one percent of all extracurricular activity participants dropped out of school because of an inability to maintain a "C" average. It was concluded that the "C" average grade requirement had not caused an increase in the dropout rate of extracurricular activity participants.

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The Anchorge School District
4600 Debarr Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99519

Mr. Dick Mize, Activities Coordinator
Anchorage School District

Ray Fenton, Ph.D., Research Associate
Assesment and Evaluation
Anchorage School District

INTRODUCTION

Extracurricular activities in The United States are controlled in each of the fifty states and The District of Columbia by The National Federation of State High School Associations. This is the rule, policy, and standards board that offers guidance to the operation of school activities. Within each state exists a state activities association . Generally these boards are under the leadership of an executive officer, who receives direction from an appointed board of control. The boards of control are comprised of unsalaried individuals from member schools, or more frequently, from within designated activities regions throughout a particular state. To be more point specific, each member school or school district in Alaska has one vote on a regional board of control.

The purpose of the regional boards of control and the state association is to provide leadership in the broad areas of rules making and overall conduct of extracurricular activities programs. An area of primary interest is student academic eligibility requirements necessary for participation in extracurricular activities.

The National Federation eligibility rules state that, "in order to be eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics and cheerleading during any semester after completion of the first semester of ninth grade, a student

must have passed, for the immediate preceding semester, at least four semester units of credit toward graduation". The Alaska School Activities Association has adopted the above eligibility rule for all it's member schools (Alaska School Activities Association, 1982).

Surveys have been conducted by individual states (NJSIAA Bulletin,1984) and by The National Federation in regards to academic requirements (National Federation, 1986). It has been found that eleven states and the District of Columbia have more stringent requirements than are required by The National Federation.

This is not to say that local schools cannot have even more stringent requirements than either national or state mandates. Evidence is quite to the contrary. It was determined by a survey conducted in 1984, that of Alaska's 52 school districts, 45 had greater academic eligibility requirements than those emulating from the State (A.S.A.A.,1983). Anchorage became a leader in Alaska by requiring a "C" average for activities participation during the 1984-85 school year.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine if the requirement of a "C" average for extracurricular activity participation led to a greater dropout rate of athletes in the Anchorage School District. For the purpose of the study, "C" average was defined as the average grade required of a student who is enrolled in four classes per semester which are required for

graduation. Extracurricular activity participation is defined to mean those school sponsored activities that take place after the regular school day has been completed. More specifically, extracurricular athletic activities are defined as those activities where a student competes as an individual or team member in an Alaska School Activities Association sanctioned sport. A dropout was defined as an individual who departs from the school setting through their own volition prior to completing all requirements for graduation.

Review of related literature

Although a great number of schools nationally, as well as within the State of Alaska, have adopted stringent academic requirements for extracurricular activity participation, the movement has not been without its critics. According to Benedict (1984), "It is unthinkable that a "C" average required for athletic participation be applied to boys and girls that do not have the God-given ability to earn "C's" (p.23). Weber (1981) indicated in a study that students competing in athletics had disproportionate higher requirements for participation than did those who participated in music clubs, journalism clubs or dramatics presentations. Weber's study (1981), conducted in three southern states concluded that eligibility requirements are too often unrelated to their associated activities and are often used as disciplinary action for activities participants when other disciplinary measures are failing. He found that forty percent of the schools studied

required a "C" average or better for students to be eligible to participate in student government. This was viewed the same as requiring a literacy test of voters or elected officials. Joekel (1985) stated, "By requiring a "C" average, we may move more students to mediocrity by deliberately avoiding classes in order to stay eligible" (p.5).

Opinions were varied as to the long range advisability of creating an even more stressful environment for student athletes. Harper (1987) and Rufin (1987) both indicated that the "C" average requirement was but a "quick fix" (p.23). They both further expressed concern that athletes must understand that academics are a first priority, but that a "C" average should not penalize academic advancement or athletic participation.

Not all state activity associations, or for that matter legislators, were anxious to upgrade eligibility standards. Mississippi, in 1982, allowed students to participate in the current year if they passed three subjects the previous year (Jackson Mississippi Schools,1985). During that same time period there were twelve other states with eligibility requirements less rigid than National Federation Guidelines (National Federation, 1986).

However, beginning in 1987, Mississippi students were required to pass all classes with a 70 percent average each semester (National Federation News, April 1987). California, on the other end of the spectrum, installed a "C" average in 1982 (Updating School Board Policies, 1984). Texas also gained national attention with it's "No Pass-No Play" legislation in 1985. The basic premise of the Texas legislation was to assure that all activities participants maintain a "C" average (Newsweek, 1985).

With both sides so vociferous, is it then reasonable for the Anchorage School District to expect students in extracurricular activities to maintain a "C" average? In a 1982 study conducted by the United States Department of Education, it was found that seven eighths of all students in activities met or exceeded the "C" average (National Federation News, March 1987). Also in 1982, Sweet(1986) found that of 58,000 students in eight southern states, 80 percent participated in extracurricular activities. Of these students, it was shown that the greater the number of activities a student participated in, the higher was his/her grade point average. He concluded that, "an overwhelming majority of extracurricular activity participants would meet the requirements of a cumulative 2.0 ("C"average) grade average" (p.2). George (1984) reported that, since raising the standard to a "C" average in Maryland, the number of ineligible athletic participants has significantly decreased. Through a study conducted in reaction to A Nation at Risk, Joekel (1985), observed that students with "C" average grades were less likely to participate in extracurricular activities. He found that most participants had better than a "C" average. Montoya (1986) found that since the inception of the "C" average in California, 60 percent of the activity "dropouts" had raised their grades enough to once again be eligible. Work completed by Edwards (1967), Eidsmore (1964), Phillips(1971, and Schafer (1976), all indicated that extracurricular activity participation has been associated with better academic performance as indicated by higher grade point averages.

The passing of proposition 48 by the National Collegiate Athletic Association in 1983 has prompted states to have a new look at eligibility

standards. The proposition basically states; "All freshman athletes entering NCAA Division I schools in the fall of 1987 must have an accumulative minimum grade point average of 2.0 (C Average) in a core curriculum of three years of English, two years of mathematics, two years of social science, and two years of natural of physical science, as well as a minimum combined score of 700 on the SAT, or a minimum composite score of 15 on the ACT (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 1983).

The jury is still out as to the positive and/or negative effect of raising academic standards for extracurricular activities participation. The National Collegiate Athletic Association has recently formed a task force to investigate the effects of proposition 48. As reported by Lilley (1987), "Definitive conclusion on this legislation may not be know for five years or more". "However, independent studies are beginning to indicate that the average or above average student is not adversely affected by requiring a "C" average for extracurricular participation".

Statement of the Hypothesis

In view of the affirmative studies shown above, one might assume that the "C" average requirement for extracurricular activities participation is in the best interest of students. However, no conclusive evidence has been issued to lead one to believe that the "C" average requirement in the Anchorage School District has had the positive effect of lowering the dropout rate of activities participants. It was therefore hypothesized that the dropout rate

of extracurricular activities participants has not increased since the Anchorage School District has raised eligibility standards to a "C" average.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects for this study were all students in grades nine through twelve who participated in extracurricular activities while enrolled in the Anchorage School District during the 1985-86 and 1986-87 school years. The number of extracurricular participants varied by the year. In 1985-86 there were three thousand two hundred and seventy-four participants district-wide, and in 1986-87 there were three thousand four hundred and eighty-one participants throughout the District. It is important to note that these numbers indicate a duplicate count, since a student may participate in as many as four activities in one school year. All students were enrollees of Bartlett, Chugiak, Diamond, East, Service or West High Schools. The high schools are all within boundaries of the Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska with a total senior high school population of approximately ten thousand students in grades nine through twelve.

Instrument

No standardized instrument of measurement was utilized in this study. The results were obtained from objective evaluation of the available

data. The results are presented in two forms: actual enrollment numbers, and by percentages.

Project Design

This study was based on the descriptive method of research. A significant problem that could not be overcome was the precise determination of why a student had withdrawn from school. However, based solely on grade point average at the time of withdrawal, it was nonetheless possible to test the hypothesis .

Procedure

The primary data that was needed for the study was obtained from participation eligibility forms that are submitted to the Alaska School Activities Association at the beginning of each activities season. The eligibility form indicates the student name, date of birth, semester in school, the number of classes that were passed the previous semester, and the number of classes enrolled in the current semester. The activities of interest in the study included: All State Band, All State Choir, All State Orchestra, Basketball (boy's and girl's), Cheerleading, Cross Country Running, Cross Country Skiing, DECA, Drama, Football, Foreign Language Declamation, Gymnastics, Hockey, O. E. A., Riflery, Soccer, Swimming, Tennis, Track and Field, Volleyball and, Wrestling.

To begin the study, it was necessary to select students who had withdrawn from school who were also extracurricular activities participants. This was achieved by reviewing the over-all dropout data available from the District and cross-checking that data with the District's extracurricular activity eligibility forms.

In order to achieve results that were meaningful, the researcher then determined what information to examine. It was determined that pertinent data would include a total number of activities dropouts by sex, grade, and grade point average. It was also deemed necessary to determine if an individual student may have reentered school at a latter time, if those who had re-enrolled were able to participate in activities, or if they subsequently dropped out of school again because of the failure to maintain a "C" average.

RESULTS

Utilizing the District's enrollment coding system, it was necessary to review the enrollment data for all high schools in the District in order to extricate the pertinent information regarding each subject. It was also necessary to review each activity eligibility sheet from each school in order to isolate the subjects of the study. Results were obtained from an objective evaluation of this general data (see table 1).

Table 1

Enrollment, dropout data, and extracurricular activities participants: Anchorage School District, 1985-86, and 1986-87

	1985-86	1986-87
Total enrollment (grades 9-12)	10,050	9,503
All dropouts (grades 9-12)	1,304	1,168
Activities participants (duplicated count grades 9-12)	3,274	3,481
Activities dropouts (grades 9-12)	33	36

More specific information was gained through a synthesis of specifics that were retrievable from the general data. It was found that there was no particular pattern in regards to one type of extracurricular program producing more dropouts from one school than another. To be more succinct, there were an equal number of dropouts in areas such as band and drama (non-athletic activities), as there were in basketball and hockey (athletic activities). It was also found that all schools in the District had a proportionate number of activities dropouts as related to their overall school population.

Disproportionate numbers first became apparent when the researcher examined the grade levels of the school dropouts, the sexes involved, and the grade point averages of the dropouts (illustrated in tables 2 through 4).

Table 2

Number of extracurricular activity dropouts by grade level

	1985-86	1986-87
Dropouts by grade:		
grade 12	16	19
grade 11	8	12
grade 10	7	3
grade 9	2	2

It is noted that of the total number of dropouts in 1985-86, 48 percent were in grade twelve while in 1986-87, 53 percent were in grade twelve. Conversely, only 6 percent of the total dropout numbers were in grade nine during either year of the study. This is not to say that others in the study who were in grade nine did not drop out of extracurricular activities. Eleven such students were recorded. However, they did not withdraw from school and are not therefore included in the study.

Further evidence of disproportionate data occurred when the sexes of the dropouts was considered (see table 3).

Table 3

Number of extracurricular activities school dropouts by sex

	1985-86	1986-87
Males who dropped out	24	26
Females who dropped out	9	10

It is verified with data that during the 1985-86 school year 73 percent of the activities dropouts were male while 27 percent were female. The pattern continued in 1986-87 by showing 72 percent of the dropouts to be male as compared to a 28 percent female figure. There is no logical reason for this difference. Of all activity participants in the Anchorage School District, 47 percent are female while the remainder are male. The District is consistent in it's activities offerings to both sexes.

A major component of the study involved gathering data on the grade point averages of the activities dropouts. Statistically, 79 percent of the

male students withdrew from school with less than a "C" average in 1985-86, and 85 percent in 1986-87. The data was also significant among the females. In 1985-86, 67 percent of the females had less than a "C" average, while in the following year, 50 percent had less than a "C" average (see table 4).

Table 4

Number of extracurricular activity school dropouts above and below the "C" average grade requirement

	1985-86	1986-87
dropouts with a "C" average or better:		
Males	5	4
Females	3	5
dropouts with less than a "C" average:		
Males	19	22
Females	6	5

Although the data in tables 1 thorough 4 is not encouraging, results that are crucial to the study can be realized by utilizing these tables. The tables have shown that 76 percent of all activities dropouts withdrew from school with less than a "C" average in 1985-86, in comparison to 75 percent the following year.

It can be concluded however, that the dropout rate has not increased for activities participants over the previous two years. Statistics show that less than 1 percent of all activities participants have withdrawn from school because of an inability to maintain a "C" average. Therefore, the original hypothesis that " the dropout rate of activities participants has not increased since the Anchorage School District has raised the eligibility standards to a "C" average" has been proven for the 1985-86 and 1986-87 school years.

Additional data was vicariously obtained. Although it is of interest, it is not necessarily pertinent to the present study. The data is available for review by the reader, and appears in the appendix.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study support the research hypothesis: the dropout rate of activities participants has not increased since the Anchorage School District has raised the eligibility standards to a 'C' average. As with studies of this type, one would have to continually monitor the dropout rate over the next few years in order to ascertain with definitive certainty the overall effect of the policy. As noted earlier, The National Collegiate Athletic Association is conducting a five year study with identical goals.

It is possible that more students are affected by the 'C' average requirement than are indicated in the study. Those students were not considered however, because they did not become school dropouts. The study did indicate a presence of that type of student. This is shown in table 5 (see appendix).

'C' average requirements have been present in a number of school district s across the country for the past three years. Evidence is beginning to indicate that extracurricular activities participants generally are among the brighter students in any school. For them, the 'C' average requirement is not difficult to maintain. A responsible question for the present time would be: 'Do marginal students stay away from more difficult courses because of the 'C' average requirement ?

If the answer is "yes", the responsibility then falls on the educational community to assure that the "C" average grade requirement is not punitive when its application effects a marginal student. Positive steps must be taken if there are deleterious effects on the enrollment status of that student. The author recommends an advisory meeting between the child, his/her parents, and school officials. The individual education planning (I.E.P.) procedure, currently in place in all school districts, could serve as a model for positive intervention.

One has to be concerned if a student is only a student for the purposes of extracurricular activities. However, the author believes that school age children belong in school, no matter what the motivation.

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APPENDIX

This additional information is offered with the hope that it will become a wimble of information in the quest to understand the implications of a "C" average grade requirement for extracurricular activities participation (see table 5).

Table 5

Number of activities participants who dropped out of school, those who reentered, and those who dropped out again during the 1986-87 school year (by grade)

	Dropouts who re-enrolled	Dropouts who dropped the second time
11th. grade	3	2
10th. grade	2	0
9th. grade	2	1

This data suggests that there are a number of students who attend school primarily because of the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities.